DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

(68) E

P770136-1918

August 23, 1977

EXCISE

Dear Senator Stevenson:

This is in response to your letter of August 5 requesting the Department's position on the claim against Israel for damages inflicted upon the U.S.S. Liberty in June 1967. Your constituent, [redacted] (b)(6) is interested.

The Government of Israel has discharged fully the claims of individuals and a small U.S. Government claim arising from this incident. The Department of State has pressed the remaining claim, for compensation for physical damage to the vessel itself, on a number of occasions. The Israeli Government has denied responsibility but offered to pay a nominal sum which was rejected. During the past few years this claim has been permitted to remain outstanding, but the Department of State maintains that the claim is a valid obligation of the Government of Israel.

As for our support in general for Israel, it derives from our commitment to freedom and democracy in the world. We believe that the right of every nation in the world to live free from threats of aggression and terrorism should be protected. Israel is an accepted member of the community of nations, sharing with us the ideals of democracy and freedom and desiring to live in peace with its neighbors.

In addition, U.S. assistance to Israel is of direct importance to the United States in avoiding the outbreak of another war in the Middle East. A war in any part of today's interdependent world poses a potential threat to the security and economic well-being of the U.S. An outbreak of hostilities in the strategic Middle East would

The Honorable
Adlai E. Stevenson III,
United States Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR,
REVIEWED BY J. Bourne DATE 8/5/83
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bring not only destruction to the people of that area but also the serious threat of confrontation between the U.S. and the USSR. The U.S. seeks to assure a military balance in the Middle East that will discourage resort to force and strengthen those elements interested in pursuing the negotiation of a settlement by peaceful means.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.

Drafted by: NEA/IAI:MGAnderson:vbj
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Clearances: NEA/IAI:
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